DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 304 CG 029 820

AUTHOR	Wright, Jan; Smink, Jay; Duckenfield, Marty
TITLE	Students Serving Students. Linking Learning with Life.
INSTITUTION	National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson, SC.
SPONS AGENCY	Corporation for National Service, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	35p.
CONTRACT	95LSGSC009
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cross Age Teaching; *Dropout Prevention; Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; Helping Relationship; *High Risk Students; *Peer Counseling; *Prevention; Secondary School Students

ABSTRACT

The National Dropout Prevention Center designed a project, Student Serving Students, to see if students in kindergarten through twelfth grade could help other students who were at risk of dropping out of school. Communities in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina developed a variety of ways for students to meet the needs of children at risk. Success stories from these encounters form the bases for this guidebook. The results from Students Serving Students show that youth can play a powerful role in stemming the tide of dropouts. Youth can be the catalyst for involving other groups in a community around a project that unites them all towards the common goal, thus building a strong web within the community to catch those who are most at risk of not successfully completing their education. Includes a list of national resources committed to helping with dropout prevention. (Author/JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 304

LINKING LEARNING WITH LIFE

Students Serving Students

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG029820

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. MADDEN

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Students Serving Students

by Jan Wright
Jay Smink
and Marty Duckenfield

3

Linking Learning With Life

This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National Service under grant number 95LSGSC009. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation or the Learn and Serve America program.

© Copyright 1999, National Dropout Prevention Center
College of Health, Education, and Human Development
Clemson University
209 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29631-1555

864-656-2599
e-mail ndpc@clemson.edu
www.dropoutprevention.org

Table of Contents

Letter to the Reader 1

The Problem: Dropouts in America Today 3

The Story of Students Serving Students 7

The Keys to Success in Dropout Prevention 9

Best Examples from Student Serving Students 14

Conclusion 25

Resources 26

Acknowledgements 27

About the Authors 28

Letter to the Reader

The National Dropout Prevention Center has been working with educators and community leaders since 1986 to improve a dropout rate where more than one out of every four students drops out of school before graduation. It has proven a difficult and complex mission, but we are finding that there are many solutions that are effective.

In 1995, the Center designed a project, Students Serving Students, with the intent of seeing if students in grades kindergarten through twelve could help other students who were at risk of dropping out of school. Our strong belief in the capacity of youth to solve problems through service learning needed to be tested with our own challenging issue.

With funding from the Corporation for National Service, this project took root in eight school districts and communities in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. We issued an appeal to young people to get involved in this difficult issue, and in response, these communities developed a variety of ways for students to meet the needs of children at risk.

Their success stories form the core of this guidebook. Based on these service learning demonstration projects, we now have a sound basis for our belief that young people can play a significant role in stemming the dropout rate as well as other high risk behaviors found in youth today.

The purposes of this guidebook are:

- to share some of the most effective strategies that have been employed in preventing students from dropping out or engaging in other risky behaviors
- to make the case that, through service learning activities, young people can play a significant role in combating the problems related to dropout prevention
- to give some ideas of how students can provide this assistance; therefore, we provide authentic examples of "students serving

students" from the demonstration project

We encourage the reader to consider involving youth in dealing with this very important problem. Students **can** help other students develop in a positive direction. Let students have the opportunity to serve students in your community—and **all** students will reap the benefits.

Jan Wright, Jay Smink, and Marty Duckenfield

The Problem: Dropouts in America Today

The Statistics

More than one out of every four students drops out of school in America today. This fact is at the root of many of today's societal problems. The statistics below paint the picture of the impact that dropouts have on the quality of life, not only for themselves, but for the society as a whole.

- Compared to the 9th grade enrollment in the United States in Fall 1992 (3,351,831), the number of public school graduates in 1995-96 was only 68.1 percent (2,281, 317) (NCES, August 1998).
- Major findings from a Texas study (1985 to 1998) indicated that, due to the loss of 1.2 million students, the state lost $319 billion in foregone income; lost tax revenues; and increased criminal justice, welfare, unemployment, and job training costs (Missing: Texas Youth, 1999).
- Nearly one-third of female high school dropouts leave because of pregnancy (NELS: 1988).
- 82 percent of America's prisoners are high school dropouts (The demographics of school reform, 1990).
- Of those half million youths who dropped out between October 1997 and October 1998, the unemployment rate of dropouts was higher than that of high school graduates—28.2 percent versus 18.4 percent (News, June 25, 1999).
- Real earnings adjusted for changes over time in the cost of living from 1963 to 1995 showed a decline in weekly earnings for college graduates (9 percent), high school graduates (17 percent) and high school dropouts (24 percent) (Katz & Autor, 1998).

References:

The demographics of school reform: A look at the children. (1990). *CDP Newsletter, 1*(3), 1-3.

Katz, L.F., & Autor, D.H. (1998). *Changes in the wage structure and earnings inequality.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Missing: Texas youth. Dropout and attrition rates in Texas public high schools. (1999). San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association.

NCES. (August, 1998). *Statistics in brief.* Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, U. S. Department of Education.

News. (June 25, 1999). *College enrollment and work activity of 1998 high school graduates*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

NELS: 88- National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: First Follow-up Study. (1990). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Why Do Students Drop Out of School?

Let's take a look at the factors that tend to describe the student who is most likely to dropout of school. These students generally:

- have a poor attitude about school
- display low ability and/or failure to achieve
- have high absence and tardiness rates
- exhibit behavior and discipline problems
- experience poor relationships with both peers and adults
- may abuse drugs
- have low self-esteem
- have friends who have dropped out
- do not participate in school activities

In addition, they generally come from a financially disadvantaged home, with little to no parental involvement and low parental expectations. Schools are found to contribute through lack of relevant curriculum, a negative climate, lack of adequate counseling, passive instructional strategies, disregard of student learning styles, and low expectations.

The dropout problem has long-term effects—it not only affects the lives of individual young people and their families; it also is impacting our society. There are many difficult social and economic issues today—crime, drug abuse, poverty, teenage pregnancy, and health care for uninsured families—that are directly related to the educational failure that dropouts represent. In addition, the jobs of the 21st century will require more years of education, not less. The future economy is dependent on a well-educated workforce.

A Solution: Youth As Resources

A century or more ago in the United States, young people were looked upon as genuine resources. Certainly, they played significant roles in their families at a younger age as both wage earners and farm laborers.

As our society has evolved, young people have had greater opportunities to become educated beyond the years of their grandparents and other earlier generations, which provides them with a knowledge-based background to enter a wide variety of professions that did not exist in earlier times. The educational system that has developed, however, and the lesser role for young people required by their families, have placed youth in the position of being recipients of society's offerings, rather than being contributors.

As the former director of PennSERVE, John Briscoe, has frequently described this phenomenon, today's students are "information rich, yet experience poor" while their ancestors were indeed "experience rich, yet information poor."

We can restore the balance by providing our very knowledgeable youth with opportunities to be authentically involved in their society—not just as the recipients, but as the contributors. They do have the potential to solve community problems.

Indeed, service learning activities in a variety of areas, all across this country, have shown how young people are getting involved in their communities as equal partners. Environmental problems and human needs problems related to our elderly citizens are receiving much successful attention from children and youth today. In addition, thousands of cross-age tutoring projects are showing great results, for all involved.

What a great resource—our youth! They are making a difference, and we do need to look to them for innovative and effective solutions to society's problems.

The Story of Students Serving Students

Project Design

We believed that if we sincerely asked young people to become involved in an important issue—dropout prevention—they would come up with some effective solutions. We felt that students would have much to offer; in addition to their enthusiasm and fresh ideas, they also would have a real understanding of an issue which affected so many of their peers.

We put this belief to the test when we applied for funds from the Corporation for National Service in 1995. We hoped that we could demonstrate that youth could work with the adults within their communities, through their schools, community agencies, and business partners, to address the issues related to dropout prevention. We wanted to see if students, through service learning activities, could help prevent their peers—whether the same age, older, or younger—from becoming yet another dropout statistic.

A request for proposals was sent to schools and community-based agencies in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. The proposal asked for youth to be involved in setting up and implementing projects that would address the problem of potential dropouts—in other words, devise ways to keep youth in school. Capitalizing on the best resource available, the overall project would become known as Students Serving Students.

The three-year demonstration project involved eight sites:

- Bagdad, Florida
- Miami, Florida
- Valdosta, Georgia
- Aiken, South Carolina
- Lakeland, Florida
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Thomasville, Georgia
- Charleston, South Carolina

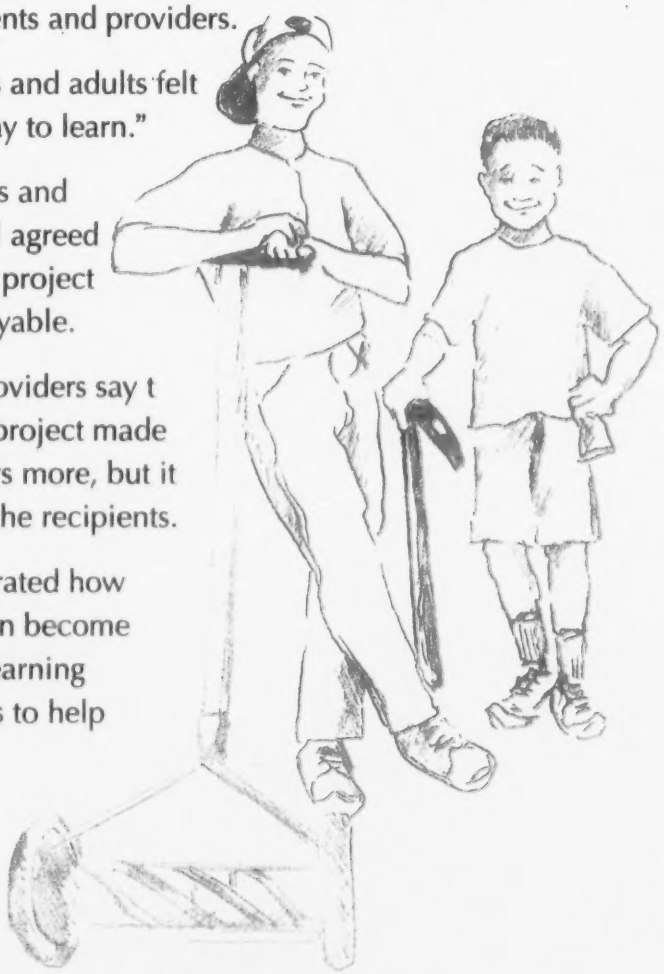
Later in this book, you will get to "visit" each of these sites. As you will see, they used a wide variety of approaches to meet the needs of students who could be potential dropouts.

Project Results

Was the work done in these eight communities effective as well as innovative? What did the evaluation show?

The Students Serving Students demonstration project had positive data in the areas that researchers look at to see if effective dropout prevention is occurring. Attitude, attendance, and achievement are key indicators of success. In addition, community involvement increases the potential for student success.

- During the two years data was collected, the areas of attendance, classwork, behavior, and attitude toward school showed positive gains for student recipients and providers.
- The majority of students and adults felt that this was a "great way to learn."
- Students, both recipients and providers, and adults all agreed that participation in the project made school more enjoyable.
- Not only did student providers say t hat participating in the project made them want to help others more, but it had the same effect on the recipients.
- These projects demonstrated how theentire community can become involved. The service learning projects became bridges to help join schools and communities together.



The Keys to Success in Dropout Prevention

The 15 Most Effective Strategies

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center has been testing, researching, and identifying the most effective strategies for helping all young people graduate and start on the road to a successful life. Fifteen strategies have emerged over time as the most proven and effective means for achieving these goals. They are listed below:

- Systemic Renewal—A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners.
- Community Collaboration—When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, an infrastructure is created that provides a caring, supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.
- Professional Development—Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and need to have an avenue by which they continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.
- Family Involvement—Research consistently finds that family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.
- Early Childhood Education—Birth-to-three interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can modify IQ. The most effective way to reduce the number of chldren who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience.
- Reading/Writing Programs—Early interventions to help low-achieving students recognize that focusing on reading and writing skills is the foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.
- Alternative Schooling—Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options which can lead to graduation, with programs

paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.

- Individualized Instruction—A customized individual program for each student would allow teachers flexibility with the instructional program and extracurricular activities.
- Instructional Technologies—Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction which engages students in authentic learning, addresses multiple intelligences, and adapts to students' learning styles.
- Mentoring/Tutoring—Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring is also a one-to-one activity but focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
- Service Learning—This teaching and learning method connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. It also promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
- Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences—When educators show students that there are different ways to learn, students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners.
- Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution—A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. Violence prevention means providing daily experiences, at all grade levels, which enhance in all students positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills.

- Career Education/Workforce Readiness—A quality guidance program is essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.
- Out-of-School Experiences—Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas—especially important for students at risk of school failure.

Just like adults, students can look at these fifteen strategies to find guidance in developing projects which will effectively solve the dropout problem in their community.

It is interesting to note in the chart below that the Students Serving Students projects collectively employed these most effective strategies. Their efforts support our research findings that these strategies are indeed effective.

The Most Effective Strategies

Sites	Systemic Renewal	Community Collaboration	Professional Development	Family Involvement	Early Childhood Education	Reading/Writing Programs	Alternative Schooling	Individualized Instruction	Instructional Technologies	Mentoring/Tutoring	Service Learning	Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences	Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution	Career Education/Workforce Readiness	Out-of-School Experiences
Bagdad, FL		●		●		●		●		●	●	●			
Lakeland, FL		●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●				●
Miami, FL	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●			●	
Atlanta, GA		●	●			●			●	●	●				●
Valdosta, GA	●	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Thomasville, GA		●		●		●		●	●	●				●	●
Aiken, SC		●	●		●					●	●	●			
Charleston, SC		●	●			●		●	●	●					

What Do All Children Need to Succeed?

Since 1997, General Colin Powell has led an initiative known as America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth, with the goal of "mobilizing individuals, groups, and organizations from every part of American life, to build and strengthen the character and competence of our youth."

At the heart of America's Promise is a set of five basic promises made to every child in America. To point them in the right direction, to help them grow up strong and ready to take their place as successful adults, these five promises must be fulfilled for all children and young people:

- An ongoing relationship with a caring adult—parent, mentor, tutor or coach
- A safe place with structured activities during nonschool hours
- A healthy start
- A marketable skill through effective education
- An opportunity to give back through community service

Source: America's Promise

America's Promise has done an outstanding job of galvanizing public attention and efforts on behalf of our children. Businesses and organizations together are committing major amounts of time and money to help all young people achieve their potential. General Powell's national organization has given an incredible boost to dropout prevention efforts by involving so many new volunteers. By involving the community more, this initiative certainly takes to heart the well-known proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Most of this effort has been targeted towards adults; however, this exciting initiative can also serve as a challenge to **all** young people to meet the needs of every child in our society. Much like Students Serving Students has already done, using the goals of America's Promise can help to unleash the unlimited potential of today's youth to

stem the tide of at-risk behaviors, including dropping out of school, becoming pregnant, using illegal drugs, and becoming involved in crime and violence.

The student projects from Students Serving Students incorporated many of the principles that General Powell has made famous through the America's Promise initiative. Note in the chart on the right how these projects related to each of the five goals.

America's Promise Goals

Sites	An ongoing relationship	A safe place	A healthy start	A marketable skill	Community service
Bagdad, FL		●		●	●
Lakeland, FL	●	●		●	●
Miami, FL	●			●	●
Atlanta, GA	●	●		●	●
Valdosta, GA	●		●	●	●
Thomasville, GA	●	●		●	●
Aiken, SC			●	●	●
Charleston, SC	●			●	●

Best Examples from Students Serving Students

Although there were a variety of service learning activities at each of the eight sites, the following vignettes portray some of their best solutions to the dropout issue.

Lakeland, Florida

This project employed a youth-mentoring/tutoring-youth component integrated into a summer program, with follow-up during the academic year.

Young Leaders Community Service Program had two goals:

- to empower youth service providers to create programs that assist youth recipients in at-risk situations to develop appropriate social behavior, acceptance of responsibility for their own learning, a positive attitude towards school, and improved academic performance
- to enable youth service providers to volunteer for a minimum of 40 hours to provide youth service recipients with academic enrichment experiences targeted on developing improved attitudes toward learning and school performance.

To meet these goals, a summer opportunity for youth service providers was designed to gain leadership training experience and then apply those experiences serving youth recipients with academic enrichment.

The first summer, the youth service providers were taken on tours of the community where they spoke with business and government leaders, received tutoring training, and were provided opportunities to create innovative activities to meet the identified needs of the students they would be tutoring at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lakeland.

The second summer, a more structured situation took place. A two-week Summer Science Camp for kindergarten through third grade was set up at Lincoln Avenue Academy. Prior to the camp, teachers trained the middle and high school students. The Summer Science Camp was able to maintain a one-to-one ratio of student service providers and student service recipients. The project worked so well in this format that

everyone involved—students, parents, teachers, and administrators—was very excited about coming back for the third summer. In addition to the summer program, many of the "Big Buddies" and "Little Buddies" met once a month during the school year for a special after-school activity.

During the summer of 1999, the Summer Science Camp was again held, but with an even greater commitment by all partners to the program. With funding from the Polk County Workforce Development Board's JTPA Summer Youth Employment Program and other resources developed over the years, the Young Leaders Community Service Program expanded to seven weeks. The ratio of student service providers to student service recipients was changed to one-to-two to provide more recipients with the experience.

- Contact: Beth Miller, Learning Resource Center
  904 South Missouri Avenue, Lakeland, FL 33803
  (941) 688-9477

Bagdad, Florida

This project addressed the issue of providing safe places for young people and their families to enjoy, and at the same time it became a catalyst for bringing different community partners together.

The goal of **Students Helping Students Benefits Community and County** was to increase the opportunities and percentage of students remaining in school and earning a regular high school diploma through a real-world experience that would:

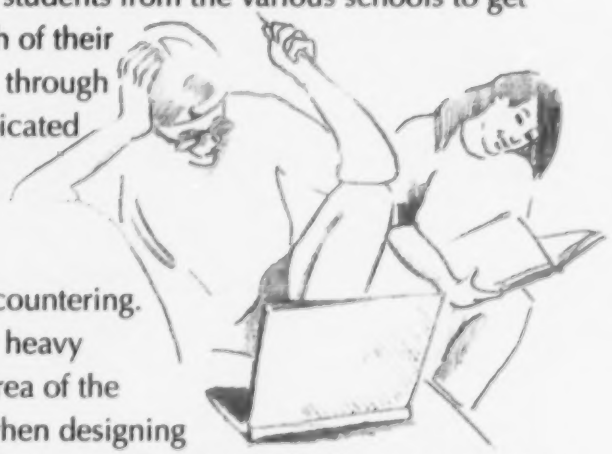
- promote self worth
- enhance the development of appropriate student characteristics
- build positive behavior and community pride
- improve skills needed for job entry

The lead for the project was a class of fourth and fifth grade students at Bagdad Elementary School. The project placed the students in a central role of working with the county commissioners to return a

rundown former baseball field to its being a vital community park. The site had become overgrown and was the location of undesirable activity. What had once been a baseball diamond was hardly recognizable as such. The children worked to clean up the area, which provided them many lessons from discussions about alcohol use to finding historic artifacts. They were present when the park was surveyed and gave input into the layout of the new park.

One of the main projects for the youth was planning, designing, and building an outdoor classroom at the park and landscaping the area. The Milton High School Agricultural and Forestry Department and the Ecology Club provided the expertise on the plantings. The youth took on the responsibility of checking on the park and maintaining it on a regular basis throughout the project.

Because scheduling the students from the various schools to get together was difficult, much of their communication took place through technology. They communicated by e-mail and studied numerous web sites to learn about the various subject areas they were encountering. Their math skills came into heavy use when calculating the area of the park for landscaping and when designing and building the outdoor classroom. The Bagdad Village Preservation Association helped the youth learn the history of the community and discover the importance of the role of businesses and organizations no longer in existence and how they had influenced the community. The students have also been involved in planning fundraising projects to help secure funds for the development and maintenance of the park.



- Contact: Pat Hardy, Bagdad Elementary School
  P.O. Box 255, Forsyth Street, Bagdad, FL 32530
  (850) 983-5683

Miami, Florida

In this project, students were involved tutoring younger children in English as a Second Language as well as designing an innovative curriculum in science.

Scholars in Service is a program which utilized the often unnoticed and untapped talents of alternative education students to tutor third-grade LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students in language arts at a nearby elementary school. The proposal was predicated on the belief that children with limited English proficiency could benefit from ancillary services aimed at improving their second language acquisition. The overt curricular objective for the high school students was that, by tutoring the younger students, they would improve their own English skills. The hidden curricular objective was to teach the ethic of service.

Initially, students from an alternative school, the Knight Center School for Applied Technology, were trained in tutoring skills. The student service providers went to the elementary school once a week to provide the tutoring. They were responsible for getting themselves to their elementary site via public transportation. This was originally a concern, with teachers and administrators wondering whether they would indeed show up. Attendance did not turn out to be a problem.

The 1997-98 school year marked the second year of the tutoring program. Improvement and expansion of the activities from the past year were made. The alternative education students still tutored third-grade LEP students in language arts, but they also added a science component to the program. This addition came through the initiative of the alternative education students themselves. They felt they had more to share with these youngsters.

The science department has a program aimed at improving knowledge of the South Florida marine environment. This aspect of the Scholars in Service project involved the students of the Marine Biology and Oceanography classes instructing the third-grade students in this subject matter. The elementary students came to the Knight Center to

participate in various activities designed by the high school students, view the seven marine aquariums, and go to a nearby recreational area to see local examples of marine communities. They were given an aquarium for their own classroom, as well as printed materials developed by the high school students. The expanded goals of the project included increasing knowledge and interest in science as well as language arts. In addition, the high school students experienced further demonstration of their value and worth.

- Contact: Michael Guthrie, School for Applied Technology
  225 N.E. 34th Street, Miami, FL 33137
  (305) 372-1857

Atlanta, Georgia

This project is an example of how a community-based organization can take the lead in giving students the opportunity to solve community problems through learning about their neighborhood and their heritiage.

The **Community Stories** project is built upon the basic beliefs that shape all activities of the Children's Museum of Atlanta—that:

- children of every age can and should share responsibility for their own learning
- learning is enhanced when adults and children become learning partners
- children function in a multidisciplined world and benefit from integrated experiences
- play is a critical way for children and adults to learn about new things and understand more about the familiar
- community collaboration enhances programs and helps participating organizations reach new audiences
- interactive learning need not occur in a single facility—the prin-

ciples of a good children's museum can be exported to schools and community settings

Coordinated by the Children's Museum of Atlanta (CMA), Community Stories is a program designed to give middle and high school youth the opportunity to discover their community's story through a series of interactive experiences. Participants practice leadership skills, explore the role of civic responsibility, and plan and implement a program for younger students.

The program includes community exploration; interpreting and examining artifacts and architecture; field experiences to museums and cultural institutions; reflection through art, drama, and journals; career exploration, original research and oral history interviews; demonstrating learning through service; and leadership development.

The activities undertaken by the young people evolved into a product— an activity booklet titled *Things To Do—Places To Go.* This details some of the Community Stories activities that can be done by parents with their children and teachers with their students.

The Children's Museum of Atlanta helps connect schools to community resources that have the capacity to extend learning. CMA's strategic alliances support Community Stories and build lasting bridges between schools and community resources. Partners include: Atlanta History Center, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Alliance Theater Company, Atlanta Preservation Center, Boys and Girls Clubs, Georgia State University, Hands On Atlanta, various neighborhood development units, senior centers, and Youth Communication/*VOX* Teen Newspaper.

- Contact: Alli Scarborough, Children's Museum of Atlanta
  P.O. Box 7684, Atlanta, GA 30357
  (404) 659-5437

Valdosta, Georgia

The original project truly sparked a districtwide effort incorporating service learning through mentoring, conflict resolution, and curriculum reform. Students are an integral part of the leadership.

In the original proposal for **Project SPARK**, the Valdosta City Schools cited a needs assessment which showed that one of the top three priority needs identified was a community service program for suspended and expelled students. The program objectives were to:

- spark appropriate behavior
- spark acceptance of responsibility for individual learning
- spark interest in remaining in school
- spark better academic performance
- spark service learning in order to give youth providers opportunities to help solve the dropout problem

Initial partners in the project were the Education Council, an umbrella organization which serves as a resource for all educational initiatives in the Valdosta-Lowndes County community, and LODAC—Lowndes Drug Action Council.

In the beginning, the primary activity of the youth service providers was to provide tutoring for elementary age students through a Study Buddy program. However, the "spark" quickly flamed. Teachers, as well as students, began to envision how service learning could be integrated in a variety of ways, K-12, to enhance the school experience for all students, making it a place youth want to be, and at the same time, meet many different school and community needs.

Three years after the initial tutoring effort, service learning is alive and still growing in all ten of the Valdosta City Schools. A multitude of projects have been done, including tutoring programs, the building of an outdoor classroom, the creation of nature trails, beautification of school property, a Junior Fire Marshals program, peer mediation, conflict resolution, alcohol and other drugs education, Black History

Museum, self-esteem lessons, a world map project, Hyder House (a Habitat home), Book Buddies, Ambassadors, intergenerational service programs, and more. There has also been meaningful involvement with other streams of service—AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA—as well as Valdosta State University, many community organizations and businesses, and individual citizens.

- Contact: Vickie Burt, Valdosta City Schools
  P.O. Box 5407, Valdosta, GA 31603
  (912) 333-8500

Thomasville, Georgia

After making a beginning with tutoring, this project incorporated reading and social skills as well as family involvement and a summer enrichment program.

The **Study Buddy** program in Thomasville had four program objectives:

- raise reading scores of students at risk of dropping out
- involve community/families in education
- improve recipients' self-esteem through acquisition of new academic and social skills
- afford youth service providers opportunities for creation of educational programs for recipients.

The initial phase consisted of providing training in service learning for key staff, then training other district staff. Forty high school teacher cadets and forty middle school students were selected and trained in a reading program (Right to Read) and a social skills program (I Can Problem Solve). Leadership training was also provided. This training was provided on a regular basis, along with weekly reflection sessions, throughout the year. The students tutored second and third grade elementary students. In addition, fourth and fifth grade elementary students read with kindergarten and first grade students once a week.

During the second year, in addition to the tutoring and reading, the youth service providers put together games and activities that the recipi-

ents could take home and do with their parents. Mini-grants were also offered to teachers and their classes. They wrote up the service learning project they were interested in and provided the tie to the curriculum. The high school students also offer an after-school program.

Another addition came with the summer school program in 1998. Summer school students in the fifth grade paired up with younger students for early morning and after-school reading sessions.

All youth service providers and recipients joined together for a celebration. Students from three schools worked together on a beautification project at the elementary school and had an Easter Egg Hunt. It was a highly visible project and will continue to remind the students of the work they have done together.

- Contact: Maggie Boozer, Scott Elementary School
  100 N. Hansell Street, Thomasville, GA 31792
  (912) 225-2631

Aiken, South Carolina

The central approach in this school district was to develop and foster life skills with a focus on a conflict resolution/peer mediation program. Aiken's goal was to assist youth in creating and developing life skills to foster:

- positive social behavior
- responsibility for self
- a positive attitude toward school
- improved academic performance

STARS (Serving Together As Responsible Students) took place at several schools. At Aiken Elementary School, a puppet program was developed to present social issues and behavior modification subject matter. The students were divided into smaller groups to facilitate training. Each group met for one hour each week to practice their puppetry skills. Some scripts were written by the students. Presenta-

tions were made in the school and throughout the community, and the students were called upon to help train students at other schools, including the high school. Team building and conflict resolution activities were directed by high school students to groups of students at the elementary schools and in local agencies serving the students in after-school programs. Puppetry and songs continue to serve as vehicles to impress valuable life skills on the minds of the younger students.

A new course, Peer Mediation, has become a part of the curriculum at South Aiken High School. A teacher, community speakers, the guidance counselors, and an AmeriCorps member work with the class on life skills, peer mediation, and character building. Students receive one credit for the five-day, one-hour class, and completion of 40 hours of community service. An after-school class was formed because of the need and desire expressed by the students. The South Aiken High School students are also assisting two elementary schools in developing peer mediation programs. Plans for the continuation of the program involve the creation of peer mediation groups at Aiken Middle School, Schofield Middle School, and Aiken High School. Students from South Aiken will work directly with the Aiken High School students.

- Contact: Alice Kirkland, Aiken County School District
  1000 Brookhaven Drive, Aiken, SC 29803
  (803) 641-2555

Charleston, South Carolina

This project focuses on tutoring, using a strong collaboration of young adults to provide the necessary training.

Although **Reading Soul Mates** has undergone some modification since the beginning of the project, it has always been a peer tutoring program, and has spread to a variety of locations.

Reading Soul Mates now is taking place at 21 sites involving over 1,600 students in Charleston. Of the 21 sites, 16 are elementary schools, two are middle schools, two are high schools, and one is a

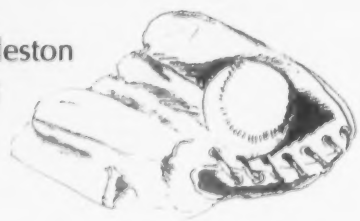
community-based learning center. In addition, there are summer programs. All programs are coordinated by Youth Service Charleston.

At the elementary schools, fourth and fifth graders serve as reading tutors for first and second grade students. The youth providers are trained in what to look for in books, how to read them, what kinds of questions to ask the younger students, and other language arts skills. They are primarily trained by AmeriCorps-NCCC members, students from the College of Charleston and the Citadel, and community members. These young adults oversee the pairs of reading buddies, serve as a buddy if a young provider is absent, facilitate the sessions, and do additional tutoring.

At the middle schools and high schools, the tutors are also trained by young adults. The youth service providers become reading tutors at feeder elementary schools or, in one case, at a Head Start center. At the community-based learning center, Reading Soul Mates is part of their after-school program.

The goal now is to implement Reading Soul Mates in every interested elementary school in Charleston County and then to surrounding counties. Middle schools and high schools will also be encouraged to incorporate Reading Soul Mates to fit their needs. Youth Service Charleston is also committed to offering Reading Soul Mates in more community-based after-school and summer programs. Additionally, to encourage expansion of the concept, Youth Service Charleston offers training to educators outside the Charleston area who want to implement the program.

- Contact: Rebecca Burton, Youth Service Charleston
  P.O. Box 22085, Charleston, SC 29413-2085
  (843) 937-6488



Conclusion

The results from Students Serving Students are clear—youth **can** play a powerful role in stemming the tide of dropouts. This is a problem that needs every sector of society providing the human resources necessary to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable young people. Youth can often be the catalyst for involving other groups in a community around a project that unites them all towards the common goal, thus building a strong web within the community to catch those who are most at risk of not successfully completing their education.

Your students can also be successful in meeting the ever-present needs of today's children and youth. Their future is really our future, and it falls upon all of us, and that includes our youth, to find solutions to the perplexing problem of dropouts.

Resources

- America's Promise
  909 North Washington Street, Suite 400
  Alexandria, VA 22314-1556
  703-684-4500 www.americaspromise.org

- Corporation for National Service
  1201 New York Avenue, N.W.
  Washington, DC 20525
  202-606-5000 www.cns.gov

- National Dropout Prevention Center
  209 Martin Street, Clemson University
  Clemson, SC 29631-1555
  864-656-2599 www.dropoutprevention.org

- National Youth Leadership Council
  1910 West County Road B
  St. Paul, MN 55113
  651-631-3672 www.nylc.org

- National Service Learning Clearinghouse
  University of Minnesota, 1954 Buford Avenue, Room R460
  St. Paul, MN 55108
  800-808-SERV http://umn.edu/~serve/

- Learn and Serve America Exchange
  Exchange National Center
  National Youth Leadership Council
  1910 West County Road B
  St. Paul, MN 55113
  877-LSA-EXCHange www.lsaexchange.org

Acknowledgements

This publication would not have been possible without the support of many people. We wish to thank:

- The wonderful young people who served in these eight projects. We are sincerely indebted to them for their commitment to helping with the issue of dropout prevention.
- The adults in the Students Serving Students communities who supported the young people—facilitating the projects and trusting, from the beginning, that these youth can make a difference in meeting the needs of youth at risk of dropping out of school.
- Special thanks go to: Beth Miller, Executive Director, Learning Resource Center, Lakeland, FL; Pat Hardy, Teacher, Bagdad Elementary School, Bagdad, FL; Michael Guthrie, Director, and Lori Nazareno, Teacher, School for Applied Technology, Miami, FL; Jill Morehouse Lum, former Project Coordinator, and Alli Scarborough, Children's Museum of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA; Vicki Burt, Assistant Superintendent, Valdosta City Schools, Valdosta, GA; Maggie Boozer, Lead Teacher, Scott Elementary School, Thomasville, GA; Jean Schwalbert, former Teacher, Aiken Elementary School, and Alice Kirkland of the District Office, Aiken, SC; Jennifer Rezeli and Rebecca Burton, Project Coordinators, Youth Service Charleston, Charleston, SC; and to the countless teachers, administrators, parents, community organization personnel, and business people in these communities who were involved in this project.
- Patricia Cloud Duttweiler, Assistant Director, National Dropout Prevention Center, for designing the evaluation component; gathering and analyzing the data; and for lending her expertise to other areas of the project.
- The Corporation for National Service and the Department of Service Learning for the financial support which made this project possible, and especially to Calvin Dawson and Jodi Raybuck who served as Program Officers for the Students Serving Students grant.

About the Authors

Jan Wright, a former elementary school principal, was the coordinator of the Students Serving Students project along with Dr. Patricia Cloud Duttweiler, Assistant Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center. Jan has served as a service learning coordinator at the Center since 1993, and is the author of *Administrator's Guide to Service Learning*.

Jay Smink, Executive Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center, is a national leader in dropout prevention and has long promoted the effective strategies described in this guidebook. He is the author of the recent publication, *A Training Guide for Mentors*, and serves on the National Mentoring Partnership's Public Policy Council.

Marty Duckenfield, Public Information Director at the National Dropout Prevention Center, oversees the Center publications, including the *Linking Learning With Life* series. She was a co-author of *Partners in Prevention: Involving College Students in Dropout Prevention.*

National Dropout Prevention Center

College of Health, Education, and Human Development
Clemson University , 209 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29631-1555
Telephone 864-656-2599 e-mail: ndpc@clemson.edu
Web site: http://www.dropoutprevention.org